

National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

Iowa: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient, sediment and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Iowa Priority Watersheds

Three Iowa watersheds were chosen to participate in the NWQI: Wall Lake Inlet, Badger Creek, and Lower South Fork Chariton River.

Wall Lake Inlet (Black Hawk Lake)

Wall Lake Inlet Watershed covers 14,535 acres in Sac and Carroll counties. Targeted conservation in the watershed will help to protect Black Hawk Lake, a natural lake that borders the east edge of the City of Lake View.

Row crop agriculture, mostly corn and soybeans, is the dominant feature of the watershed. Black Hawk Lake is listed on the Iowa 303(d) Impaired Waters List.

One of the major goals in this watershed is to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loading into Black Hawk Lake. Through targeted best management practices in the watershed, such as no-till, cover crops, and stream bank stabilization, the in-lake water quality goal is to be below impairment level.



Terraces and no-till farming are just two of several conservation practices offered in each of Iowa's NWQI watersheds.

Photo: Jason Johnson

Badger Creek

Badger Creek Watershed covers 33,581 acres in Madison, Dallas, and Warren counties in south central Iowa. Badger Creek Lake, which covers about one-third of the watershed, is a popular fishing and recreation spot that landed on Iowa's impaired waters list in 1998. The lake fell below standards set by the state for supporting aquatic life and primary contact recreation.

A major goal of the NWQI is to help improve Badger Creek Lake conditions by reducing sediment and nutrient delivery to the lake.

According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 5,774 tons of sediment reaches Badger Creek Lake when rain falls in the watershed. That's like dumping 385 dump truck loads into the lake annually.

Nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are also contributing to water quality problems in Badger Creek Lake. High nutrient levels are leading to poor water quality.

To help improve water quality in the watershed, farmers are encouraged to implement conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and trap nutrients. These include terraces, grassed waterways, residue management, prescribed grazing, and cover crops.

Lower South Fork Chariton River

Lower South Fork Chariton River Watershed covers 35,004 acres in Wayne and Appanoose counties in southern Iowa. The watershed is on the west side of the Rathbun Lake pool area.

Water quality monitoring conducted in Rathbun Lake indicates negative impacts by agricultural non-point source pollution. More specifically, an overabundance of silt, nutrients and pesticides flows into the lake annually. Rathbun Lake is a high priority water body on the Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters, primarily from high levels of atrazine.

Farmers in the watershed are encouraged to adopt cropland conservation practices such as terraces, sediment control basins, nutrient and pest management, and conversion of marginal cropland to grassland.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural

economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

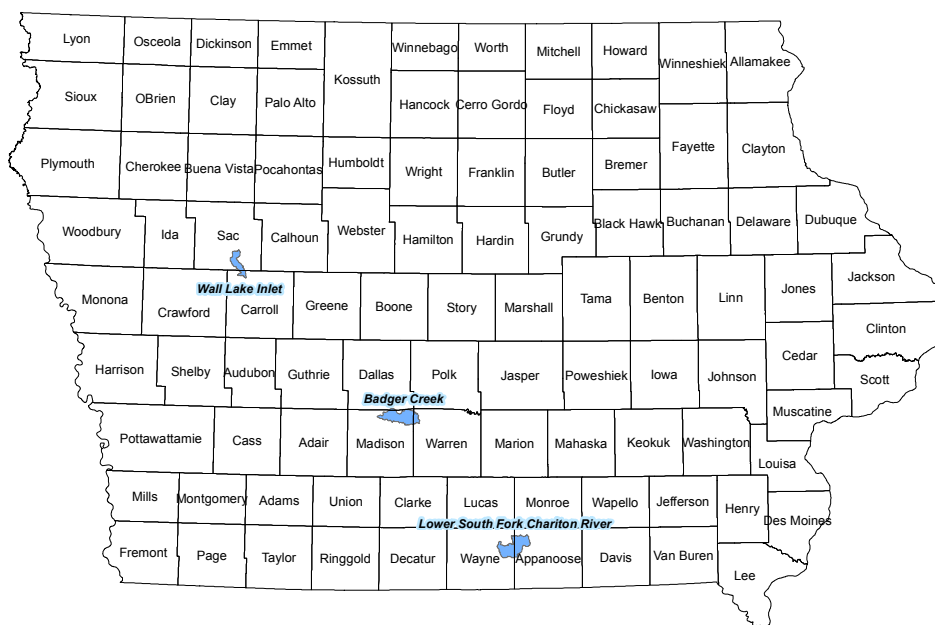
NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a [USDA Service Center](#). To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application and develop a plan while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2012, must be received by June 15, 2012.

For more Information

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Each of Iowa's three selected NWQI watersheds are listed on the U.S. EPA's 303(d) List of Impaired Waters.

USDA-NRCS GIS Staff



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